

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
MINUTES OF MEETING
October 27, 2005

A meeting of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education was held at the Shepard Building - 255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903 and convened at 4:10 p.m.

In Attendance

J. DiPrete, C. Callahan, P. Guida, R. Camara, A. Beretta, G. Grove, M. Paradis and K. Forbes

Public Remarks:

There were no public remarks.

Chairman Remarks:

Chairman DiPrete reported that on October 10 and 11th, he had spoken at a conference in Minnesota on “unconventional schools” sponsored by Education Evolving and the Center for Policy Studies at Hamline University. The “mini” conference was an invitation only conversation to discuss ways to encourage public policy initiatives to meet the needs of “disengaged” students. Rhode Island was invited because Ron Wolk, one of the founders of the “Big Picture Company” is a member of the group and was impressed with how the Regents and RIDE promulgated the high school regulations which call for varying kinds and degrees of assessments.

Additionally, Mr. DiPrete reported that he, Patrick Guida, Colleen Callahan, Karin Forbes and Sharon Osborne had attended the NASBE conference in Phoenix, Arizona October 12 – 15. He said that he and Sharon Osborne had presented a session on Rhode Island’s high school regs to the NCSBEE group. He congratulated Sharon on her election as the President of NCSBEE.

Along with Regents Beretta and Forbes he had attended the Milken Awards presentations at Cranston East and Exeter-West Greenwich - Diana Petrosinelli of Cranston East and Andrew Wallace of Exeter-West Greenwich received the awards.

Earlier in the day he had attended a meeting with the Governor’s Office along with Regents Camara and Guida to talk about how the state can achieve economies of scale within our education system.

And, on Monday, October 24th, he had attended the Board of Governors Academic and Student Affairs Committee to talk about setting Governors’ priorities. Of particular attention this year will be the joint collaborative PK-16 efforts and better preparing Rhode Island students for academic success at the post secondary level.

Approval of Minutes

MOVED AND SECONDED: That, The Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Meeting Minutes of September 29, 2005 as Presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Cut Scores

RIDE Director of the Office of Teacher Certification, Paula Jo Gaines briefly reviewed the agenda item. She told the members of the Board that at the direction of the Board, staff in the office has been working to align certification requirements with the definition of a “highly qualified” teacher under NCLB. Staff is now prepared to recommend to the Board the adoption of four new content knowledge tests for the certification of middle school educators and one new content knowledge test for the certification of educators of students with severe/profound disabilities.

RIDE staff member, David Roy reviewed the recommendation in detail as follows:

Regulations for the certification of middle school educators do not require a major or its equivalent. In order to meet the definition of a “highly qualified” middle school teacher under NCLB, the department assembled four panels of Rhode Island middle school educators to conduct a validation and standard setting study. The panels validated the following tests and provided a recommended passing score:

- Citizenship Education: Content Knowledge – 160;
- Middle School English Language Arts – 162;
- Middle School Mathematics – 158;
- Middle School Science – 154.

Additionally, in establishing a passing score, ETS recommends that in addition to the panel recommendation, the state should also consider other factors such as standard error of measurement, potential impact, national data, and the supply and demand of teachers in Rhode Island. The BOR School Administrator and Teacher Quality committee has discussed these issues and in these four middle school certifications, follows the recommendations of the panels on the passing score.

In the case of the certification of special educators, on March 1, 2005 the Department convened a panel of special educators to conduct a validation and standard setting study. The panel validated the following content knowledge test and recommended a passing score of 158. After reviewing the other factors, as recommended by ETS however, the BOR Teacher Quality committee recommended a passing score of 160.

Regent Callahan questioned if there is currently an option for Middle School teachers that won't have the opportunity to complete all of the requirements for highly qualified under NCLB. RIDE Deputy Commissioner, David Abbott explained that the Department and the feds are looking at offering time extensions. The group also discussed how the cut scores were reached and how they compare to the rest of the country.

MOVE AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents adopt, effective January 1, 2006 the content knowledge tests and passing scores as a requirement for the issuance of a middle school endorsement for individuals who do not have a major or its equivalent in the content area, as recommended by the Board of Regents School Administrator and Teacher Quality Committee.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

AND, THAT, the Board of Regents eliminate, effective upon adoption the two content knowledge test requirements currently in place for educators of students with severe/profound disabilities and establish, effective upon adoption, the Fundamental Subjects: Content Knowledge test and passing score for this area of certification.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Appeals

Attorney for the Board of Regents, Howard Haronian, read both recommended decisions and briefly reviewed each case.

- Warwick School Committee vs. City of Warwick

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, The Board of Regents for Elementary Education Approve the Motion to Affirm the Commissioner's decision.

VOTE – Approved Unanimously.

- Noelle C. Harris vs. Rhode Island Department of Education

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, The Board of Regents for Elementary Education Approve the Motion to Affirm the Commissioner's decision.

VOTE – Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Reauthorization of CVS Highlander

RIDE Chief Legal Counsel, Jennifer Wood reviewed the agreements of the reauthorization of the CVS Highlander Charter School, as attached. They include recommendations concerning challenges in areas such as instruction, state reporting, and managed growth. She told the members of the Board that the department has reviewed numerous sources of data pertinent to the school performance over the past five years including state assessment data, SALT data, financial data, and a five-year consolidated report submitted to the department. Department staff has also met with school officials to discuss the department's findings and analysis. Members of the Board discussed the type of assistance that the Department has been able to offer the school and how the Big Picture School "curriculum" is working at the elementary school level.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Reauthorization of the CVS Highlander Charter School for a period of five years, subject to periodic review regarding the schools performance and compliance with mandatory state reporting requirements.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Members to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees

The Chairman of the BOR State and Charter Schools Committee, Gary Grove told the members of the Board that originally the Board committee was to interview three candidates for the School for the Deaf Board of Trustees, however, they had only been able to interview one – Mark Gursky, an attorney with Gursky Law Associates. Mr. Grove told the members of the Board that his committee originally had reservations about appointing Mr. Gursky because of his close association with labor. However, after an extensive conversation with Mr. Gursky about why he wanted to be appointed to the Trustees and how he would handle any conflicts that might arise, his committee was recommending that Mr. Gursky be appointed as Chair of the Board of Trustees. The additional two candidates would be brought forward for approval as soon as possible.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve Mr. Mark Gursky as Chairman to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees, as Recommended by the Board of Regents State and Charter School Committee.

VOTE: Approved. [Regent Amy Beretta abstained]

NAEP Report

Commissioner McWalters introduced the agenda item and reviewed the results of the 2005 NAEP assessments, as attached. He talked about how Rhode Island students compared in the northeast and nation-wide in both reading and mathematics at the 4th and 8th grade levels; changes in scores from 2003; and the comparison between the “central cities”, “urban fringe” and “rural” areas. The Commissioner suggested that if the Regents would like to talk more about reading and mathematics teaching strategies, it would be more beneficial to schedule a work session at one of the committee meetings. He spoke in detail about why in some states and districts the reading scores, as reported by NAEP, have remained fairly flat. He said that under NCLB the emphasis has been on the basic core of reading. The NAEP assessments, on the other hand, test content and understanding. The Commissioner emphasized that only when we have been able to move our students up a level – to think at a higher order, will our NAEP results improve in reading. The group also discussed the problems with testing first generation English speaking students.

Discussion of Policies to Promote Student Leadership in Education

Chairman DiPrete spoke to the group about the possibility of appointing two students to the Board of Regents to serve in an advisory capacity. He said that according to a study by a Yale University student, “The Student Voice in Local Policy: A Massachusetts Case Study”, currently 96% of all Massachusetts school committees have student representatives and NASBE reports that 12 states and the District of Columbia include students on their boards – and in two of those states, students are full voting members. Following a brief Board discussion, it was decided that the issue would be considered by the BOR Committee on Academic and Student Programs with a recommendation coming to the full Board for a vote before the beginning of the year.

As part of this discussion, Chairman DiPrete also asked that the Commissioner prepare a report to the Board on Civic Education to see if the Board should include the agenda item as part of their priorities.

Report on Adult Education

Commissioner McWalters introduced the new Director of Adult Education, Johan Uvin, and reminded Board members that he is working as part of a “joint” relationship with the Department of Labor. Mr. Uvin gave the Board a presentation on the status of Adult Education including a background status report, “Where are we coming from?” state accomplishments, including the elevated status of adult education because of policy discussions and support from the Governor’s Office, General Assembly, the HRIC/SWIB/GWB and the Workforce Cabinet, as well as the Board of Regents; statistics on where we are today; where we plan to go; and how we are going to get there. A complete copy of the presentation is attached.

Discussion of Regents' Priorities/White Papers

The Commissioner distributed a complete set of “white papers” (coming out of the Regents retreat work and the Department’s work week) and a cover sheet outlining white paper considerations. The distributed papers included:

English Language Learners State Aid - To develop and implement a statewide improvement plan for English Language Learners.

Secondary School Improvement - To effectively implement the Regents’ Regulations for secondary schools, RI Diploma System.

CEIS Continued Implementation - To meet requirements of NCLB.

In\$ite - Enhancement of In\$ite to include FTE data, sub-program level expenditures, health benefits breakout and revenue reports.

District Monitoring/Support & Financial System Efficiencies - To build capacity in the Office of Finance to conduct financial reviews of school districts’ budgets and expenditures.

Leadership - To manage, coordinate, and guide programs to develop education leadership at schools, districts, and teacher-training programs throughout the state.

Gov./Adult Literacy – Comprehensive Adult Literacy Information System- Web-based database for Adult Education.

Professional Development - Initiation of professional development focused on facilitating standards-based learning.

Content/Learning Standards Development - Development and implementation of content standards for Adult Basic Education programs.

Infrastructure Personnel and Operation - To support the increased operational costs of the Office of Adult Education.

Grants - To increase the service capacity of local programs to provide increased services and flexible instruction hours.

Vision Services - To improve the coordination of statewide vision services.

State Aid & Efficiency Proposals - Addresses the Regents’ reform agenda, accountability, school improvement, increased student performance, and support for local school districts.

He told Board members that he would like to schedule a Board work session to be able to discuss, in detail, the white papers and to tie them to the work of the Regents retreat priority setting discussion. It was suggested that the Regents meet prior to the November 10th meeting for a work session.

Regent Camara reminded members that, as per the Regents budget discussions during the Finance Committee meetings, the Regents need to continue to be aware of the need to look at system-wide efficiencies as priorities are set. He pointed out some that are listed in the white papers and urged members to pass along any additional ideas.

Committee Reports

Progressive Support and Intervention

Chairman of the BOR Progressive Support and Intervention committee, Patrick Guida, reported on the work of the PS&I advisory committee/i.e., how PS&I might be used more effectively; a shift in RIDE focus to be able to assist low performing districts more directly; and how various stakeholder groups can participate in assisting in resolving issues in “troubled” districts such as Johnston.

Committee On Academic & Student Programs

Regent Callahan reported that the Committee on Academic and Student Programs had met earlier in the day to continue its work on reviewing and cleaning up the high school regulations. Today’s work focused on section 4.0 of the regs.

Executive Session

As per R.I.G.L. 42-46-5-(2), the meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m. for Executive Session.

The meeting reconvened to open session at 7:20 p.m.

MOVED and SECONDED: That the minutes of the Executive Session be sealed.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Chairman DiPrete spoke to the Board about some “housekeeping” issues concerning Board policies in setting and attending meetings and bringing forth agenda items.

Adjourn

With unanimous consent the meeting adjourned immediately at 7:50 p.m.